

The Struggles That Bind

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/24306355) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/24306355>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Bon Jovi (Band)
Relationship:	Jon Bon Jovi/Richie Sambora
Characters:	Richie Sambora , Jon Bon Jovi
Additional Tags:	Fluff , Angst , Eating Disorders , Insecurity
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2020-05-21 Words: 1,165 Chapters: 1/1

The Struggles That Bind

by [Queenofneworleans22](#)

Summary

The Struggles That Cling Like A Second Skin. The Anxiety That Whispers Like A Fiend. The Fear That You Aren't Good Enough. The Knowledge That Fear Is Right.

Notes

It isn't very graphic, but in case the tag didn't give enough warning or if you didn't see it, there is mentions of an eating disorder that is a big plot point.

ALSO. What Richie and Jon think of themselves is just the story, I think both of them are incredibly handsome (all of Bon Jovi is, really) and this is just their inner thought. This is probably not how they think in real life, it's just a story.

Oftentimes, Richie would wonder *why*.

As grateful as he was that he'd been accepted as readily and as quickly as possible, that for all his anxiety that night, his fear and trepidation as he readied himself, staring at each one of their faces- curious, awaiting. Richie felt dizzy, and knew that if he backed out, there'd be no chance of ever coming back, and in that moment, he played like there would be tomorrow, putting everything he had ever learned into that one moment, with four people looking at him, no discernible emotion coloring their faces besides that same curiosity, like he was a new specimen captured and being analyzed, and it was hot, and when the singer, *Jon*, asked if he could step out of the darkened warehouse they'd apparently been using as a recording room, or something, Richie thought for sure he'd lost it. They must've seen it on his face, in the shaking of his hands. He'd walked out, expecting nothing but a firm 'no', walking back inside about ten minutes later without thinking of anything but that rejection, the thought that Richard Sambora had blown it, ladies and gentlemen, and there was no going back, but then Jon had grinned and said 'Welcome to the band, Rich' and it seemed like a dream, but it wasn't.

Why.

It Was a lingering question, even now, as a man in his forties who wouldn't be kicked out, wouldn't be let go. A niggling question at the back of his head, there but not always aloud, peeking from its hiding place only when things toned down, when everybody retreated to bed. *WhyWhyWhy*. Richie couldn't have been the only person wanting that part, even if Bon Jovi hadn't even had a name yet, at least, not that one, because even then, there was talent, and sometimes Richie stopped and thought about how he wasn't the only person gunning for that part, but how he'd been the one chosen, and it didn't make sense.

Richie didn't view himself to be as talented as all those people said he was. Yes, he was confident in his ability to play the guitar like nobody's business, could blow them all away if time warranted, but now and especially back then, he certainly wasn't the most talented of the bunch, and yet he'd been chosen. By David, by Tico, by Alec, by Jon. they'd had their choices and picked some kid who wasn't even that talented, who was so nervous and excited the same time that he'd had to take a deep breathe right before he'd entered the building, trying to control his nerves, and failing, and it had showed, but in those ten minutes, somehow, they'd all agreed that Richie was the person that they needed to finish their little group.

Richie wasn't attractive. Richie wasn't all that talented. Richie could stand it front of the mirror and pick out each and every flaw and still room for more, looking at each flaw and knowing them like an old friend. Richie didn't fit in with the others, he just didn't, and *Why did nobody else see that?*

Richie wasn't the guitarist that belonged. Richie was the guitarist that had squeezed in and stole the part and now as he stood there, guitar hanging from around his chest, watching as the others got ready, Richie wondered *why*.

Jon felt sick whenever he ate.

He could fake it, could sit down and shut up and eat whatever was on his plate well enough, pushing it around after every bite to disguise how little he'd eaten, chewing and forcing himself to *swallow, Jon, swallow*, and then because usually they were on tour, trying to squeeze two days into one, Jon could pretend he was just going to go use the bathroom and the bathroom would be empty, and Jon could do it, forcing himself to rid his body of whatever had been swallowed, feeling so guilty but so much lighter, the deed done, smiling and nodding like nothing was wrong when he came back out.

If you were to ask Jon when it had started, this mess of eating and forcing it back out, he couldn't have given a straight answer, only that sometime in his teens, things had started, that feeling of disgust every time he ate, of wishing to look skinny, of wishing to look like just one of the other kids but *better*, and then overhearing some girl at school whispering to a friend about some thing she was doing, about how it'd make her *skinny*, and Jon decided to try it. Why not? What could go wrong? And it'd taken off from there like a loathsome bird, never to land, doomed to fly, forever.

No matter what was said, what was done, what every look of faint concern said, Jon didn't stop because *He wasn't skinny*. He looked in the mirror and wouldn't stop looking at his stomach, couldn't stop looking, pulling up shirts and jackets and whatever else to look and see that, no matter what he did, no matter how much he exercised and how much he threw up, there would be fat, and *nobody else would see it!* Jon could see it, could feel it, and it felt embarrassing and Jon felt ashamed, still did, every reflective surface offering a view of *fat Jon, you're fat, you're ugly, how can anybody stand to look at you*.

From his teens to his twenties to now, in his thirties, not to far from turning forty, still fat, still heavy, still wondering what could be done. Jon felt ugly, Jon felt guilty every time he sneaked to the bathroom, pretending not be doing exactly what he was doing, nobody seeing what was going on, only one person seeing that everything might not be so right and okay, and Jon kept doing it because what else should be do? Grow fat? Just let himself go? There was no stopping, not now, not ever. Jon would never be skinny, but he'd keep trying.

In some ways, they were two peas in a pod. In others, even polar opposite had more similarities. But somehow, someway, they attracted each other, like moths to a flickering light, like bees to honey.

They brought out the best in each other. It wasn't the same whenever they were away doing separate projects, it only really seemed right, together, side-by-side, a promised duo with more hiding, bubbling beneath the surface, sneaking kisses and embraced and smiles.

The Day they tell the others is the best of any of their lives. No judgement, no anger, just cheers and "we already knew" and that feeling of family, of strength and love.

Like two pieces of a puzzle, when they connected for that first time, before they'd made it big, a shy kiss in the night that had morphed into so much more, still persisting and still strong so many years later, they made a full picture.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!